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By AT NARA Date 9/4/03

POL



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TELEGRAM

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[REDACTED] 401

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

AID-20 OMB-01 EA-11 EUR-25 RSR-01 /149 W
----- 093824

R 030605Z MAY 73
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9061
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

[REDACTED] ISLAMABAD 3585

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PK
SUBJ: PAKISTAN INTERNAL SITUATION: POST-CONSTITUTION
ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY: DOMESTIC SCENE HAS QUIETED WITH PASSAGE OF
CONSTITUTION APRIL 10. RETROSPECTIVELY, BHUTTO HELD
ALL CARDS SAVE ONE - BALUCHISTAN VOTES - IN YEAR-LONG
BATTLE OVER CONSTITUTION. UNITED OPPOSITION EVIDENTLY
REMAINS INTACT, BUT WITHOUT A CAUSE EXCEPT FOR BHUTTO'S
LEADERSHIP. PROBABLE BHUTTO WILL READILY WIN IN
ELECTIONS IF HELD IN NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY

1. BHUTTO'S ACHIEVEMENT OF POLITICAL CONSENSUS IN
FINAL VOTE ON CONSTITUTION APRIL 10 WAS CULMINATION OF
YEAR-LONG POLITICAL STRUGGLE. IT WAS UNEQUAL STRUGGLE
FROM BEGINNING.

① 2. EVER SINCE HIS ASSUMPTION OF POWER IN DEC 1971, MOST
PAKISTANIS -- INCLUDING MANY OF HIS OPPONENTS -- RECOGNIZED
BHUTTO AS ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO RESUMPTION BY ARMY OF

ISLAMABAD 3585
5-3-73

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POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. BHUTTO COMMANDED OVERWHELMING POSITION IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES OF TWO LARGEST PROVINCES IN COUNTRY AND ENJOYED GREAT PERSONAL POPULARITY IN BOTH REGIONS. HE CONTROLLED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WITH ITS RESOURCES FOR REPRESSION AND REWARDS. HE REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED GREATER SKILL IN POLITICAL MANUPULATION OF MASSES AND INDIVIDUALS THAN HIS OPPONENTS. REPRESENTING GOVERNMENT IN POWER, HE WAS ALSO FAVORED BY NATIONAL MOOD WHICH HAS INCREASINGLY REFLECTED DESIRE TO RETURN TO "NORMALCY".

3. ON OTHER SIDE, POLITICAL OPPOSITION FAILED UNITE AGAINST PERCEIVED THREAT FROM BHUTTO UNTIL FINAL ROUND, HELD OFFERING OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES, AND WITH EXCEPTION OF BALUCH SARDARS, WALI KHAN AND ONE OR TWO OTHERS HAD LITTLE OR NO POPULAR FOLLOWING. ITS MAIN LIABILITY IN CONSTITUTIONAL BATTLE MAY HAVE BEEN ITS INABILITY ATTRACT ANY SUPPORT FROM MASSES IN ISSUE REMOTE FROM THEIR DAILY LIVES. EMBASSY AND CONSTITUENT POSTS BELIEVE THAT MANY AMONG EDUCATED CLASSES WHO WERE INTERESTED IN CONSTITUTION GENERALLY DISAPPROVED OF OPPOSITION TACTICS, ESPECIALLY OPPOSITION BOYCOTT OF ASSEMBLY. THEY APPARENTLY FELT THAT ANY REASONABLY DEMOCRATIC PERMANENT CONSTITUTION WAS PREFERABLE TO IMPOSED INTERIM CONSTITUTION, NO CONSTITUTION OR CONTINUAL POLITICAL ARGUING.

4. NONETHELESS, OPPOSITION HELD ONE TRUMP CARD: LOYALTY OF ALL FIVE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES FROM BALUCHISTAN. PROSPECT OF CONSTITUTION REJECTED BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ONE OF COUNTRY'S FOUR FEDERATING UNITS EVIDENTLY CAUSED BHUTTO MUCH VEXATION AND MAY HAVE PROMPTED GREATER CONCESSIONS BY GOVERNMENT THAN IT WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE PREFERRED. IF BALUCHISTAN WAS BHUTTO'S ACHILLES HEEL, VARIOUS BARGAINING POSITIONS TAKEN BY OPPOSITION PRIOR TO ITS ULTIMATE BOYCOTT OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MAY HAVE ALSO INDUCED BHUTTO TO WEAKEN SOME OF CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS ACCORDED EXECUTIVE IN HIS ORIGINAL DRAFT (PARTICULARLY IN THOSE CASES WHERE APPRECIABLE NUMBER OF PPP MEMBERS EVINced SOME LATENT SYMPATHY FOR OPPOSITION STAND).

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5. OPPOSITION'S UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) HAS EVIDENTLY SURVIVED CONSTITUTION'S PASSAGE. IT HAS HELD PUBLIC MEETINGS RECENTLY IN QUETTA AND PESHAWAR WHERE UDF LEADERS ADVANCED SUCH DEMANDS AS LIFTING OF EMERGENCY AND IMMEDIATE PROMULGATION OF CONSTITUTION. WHILE UDF WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO ATTRACT SIZEABLE CROWDS, WE BELIEVE WHAT LITTLE STEAM UDF WAS ABLE BUILD UP OVER CONSTITUTION ISSUE HAS DISSIPATED. ONLY MAJOR ISSUE REMAINING FOR UDF TO CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT IS BHUTTO'S LEADERSHIP.

6. ALTHOUGH GOP -- ASSUMING, AS MANY DO, THAT IT WILL CALL ELECTIONS THIS YEAR -- WILL PRESUMABLY REFRAIN FROM ANNOUNCING THEM UNTIL LAST MINUTE, ELECTIONS MAY BECOME NEXT MAJOR FOCUS OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. PEOPLES' PARTY LIKELY TO ENTER ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN SPIRIT OF OVERKILL WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED ITS POLITICAL ACTIONS DURING PAST YEAR. EVEN THOUGH BHUTTO COULD REASONABLY EXPECT TO EQUAL HIS 1970 ELECTION RESULTS WITHOUT RESORT TO UNDUE PRESSURE AGAINST OPPOSITION, BEHAVIOR OF HIS ADMINISTRATION SO FAR SUGGESTS ANY FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS ARE NOT LIKELY TO PROVE AS FAIR AS THOSE CONDUCTED BY YAHYE IN 1970 (WHICH ADMITTEDLY WERE UNIQUE IN PAKISTAN'S SHORT HISTORY).

7. BHUTTO'S CURRENT POSITION IS ENVIABLE. HE BASKS IN POPULAR SATISFACTION OVER PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTION. HE HAS PROTECTED HIS FLANKS BY CATERING TO RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON POLITICAL RIGHT, WHILE HIS TALK OF REVOLUTION AND FOREIGN POLICY GAMBITS (E.G. RECOGNITION NORTH VIETNAM AND NORTH KOREA) ASSUAGED LEFT. HE HAS DISPOSED OF NAP AS POTENTIAL NATIONAL RIVAL BY BRANDING ITS LEADERS SECESSIONIST. WITH GOVERNMENT APPARATUS BEHIND HIM AND HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY STILL STRONG, HE SHOULD GARNER SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY IN PUNJAB AND SIND IN ANY ELECTIONS HELD OVER NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. POSSIBLY MORE WORRISOME TO BHUTTO THAN OPPOSITION MAY BE CONFLICTS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY DURING ELECTION PERIOD AS VARIOUS FACTIONS AND PERSONALITIES SEEK TO ENHANCE THEIR POSITIONS.

SOBER

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